## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An exhaust emission control system for an internal combustion engine, having a nitrogen oxide removing device provided in an exhaust system of said engine for absorbing nitrogen oxide contained in exhaust gases in an exhaust lean condition. An amount of change per unit time in the sulfur oxide amount absorbed in the nitrogen oxide removing device is estimated according to the air-fuel ratio of an air-fuel mixture supplied to said engine and the operating condition of said engine. The estimated amount of change is accumulated to thereby estimate the sulfur oxide amount absorbed in the nitrogen oxide removing device. The sulfur oxide is removed from the nitrogen oxide removing device when the estimated sulfur oxide amount has reached a set value.